

RED COATS OF THE NORTHWEST

Thrilling True Stories About the Northwestern Mounted Police—Tiny Force Controls a Great Territory.

A tiny force of 750 men, the Northwestern Mounted Police of Canada, guards and controls a territory nearly as large as the whole of Europe. They are big, powerful men physically, most of them of sturdy Scotch or Irish extraction, and the moral force of the brilliant red tunic which they wear is a minor revelation of the method by which the tiny British Isles govern an empire. Although there are thousands of Indians and half-breeds, more dangerous than Indians, and rough, reckless miners, and outlaws, in their domain, they ride the plains and climb the mountains and keep the peace of the third of a continent.

In 1873, 150 men were sent to Manitoba from eastern Canada. That was the beginning of the Northwestern Mounted Police. During Reil's rebellion they numbered 1,000. At present there are in the northwest territories 548; in the Yukon, 284.

There are three divisions, each with

er gets \$2,500 a year, his assistant \$1,500, superintendents \$1,400, inspectors, sergeants and veterinary surgeons \$1,000 each, petty officers from \$2 to \$5 cents a day, and constables—the title of enlisted men—50 to 75 cents a day.

Full dress uniform is a scarlet tunic with yellow facings, blue cloth breeches with yellow stripes, white helmet, cavalry boots and cavalry overcoat. For winter they have fur coats and moccasins. A serviceable Khaki uniform and cowboy hat is used for round work on the prairie in the summer time.

The mission of these scarlet-coated guardians is peace. Here are illustrations. They, perhaps, picture the



Inspector McDonald and Superintendent Steele, Sturdy Types of the Canadian Mounted Police.

headquarters near the United States line. Each division has outposts, with from two to ten men each. It has also a superintendent and two inspectors. Above them are the commissioner and assistant commissioner. Two extra inspectors act respectively as paymaster and quartermaster for the whole force. Pay is not munificent. The commission-

way beyond Swift Current, there was inaugurated the preliminary of a massacre, or whatever form of entertainment the brain of Piapot might devise. Then the railway management sent a remonstrance to the powers. The lieutenant governor issued an order, and two policemen rode forth carrying her

majesty's commands. Not a brigade, nor a troop; the officer bearing the written order was but a sergeant. With him was one constable; that was the force that was to move this turbulent tribe from good hunting ground to a secluded spot miles away.

Piapot refused to move. The sergeant calmly gave him fifteen minutes in which to begin striking camp. Result, fifteen minutes of abuse. The Indians screamed defiance at the sergeant and fired their guns under his charger's nose as they circled about him in their pony spirit war dance.

Piapot refused to move. The sergeant threw his picket line to the constable, dismounted, walked over to Chief Piapot's tepee and calmly knocked the key-hole out. All the warriors rushed for their guns, and one of the biggest bluffs on record was played by the redskins.

But the sergeant continued methodically knocking key-holes out, and Piapot saw that the game was up. He must either kill the sergeant—stick his knife in the heart of the whole British nation—or give up and move away.

SITTING BULL OUTWITTED.

After the killing of Custer, Sitting Bull became a more or less orderly tenant of his majesty. With 900 lodges he camped at Wood Mountain, just over the border from Montana. An arrow's flight away was the northwestern mounted police post. One morning the police found six dead Salteux Indians, scalped in approved Sioux fashion. A seventh Salteux, still alive, had seen the killing. The police buried the dead Indians and took the living one to their post.

With characteristic cheek, Sitting Bull came, accompanied by chiefs and warriors, to demand the seventh Salteux. In Wood Mountain there were twenty police backing Sergeant McDonald. With the chief there were at least 500 warriors. Sitting Bull threw his squat figure from his pony and thrust the muzzle of his gun into Sergeant McDonald's stomach. McDonald was typical of the force. He rushed his gun one side and told the chiefs to step inside the gate, stack their arms and come inside the shack for a pow-wow.

They demurred; the sergeant was firm. Outside, it was play day in Bedlam. The young bucks rode and whooped and fired their guns. The sergeant to Sitting Bull. Sitting Bull demurred.

"Send them away!" repeated the sergeant. "If you have authority."

Sitting Bull and his chiefs made toward the door, but there were interjections—red-coated objections. And outside in the yard, the chief's rifles were stacked.

Sitting Bull, like Piapot, had brains. The bucks were sent away. Then the sergeant persuaded the chiefs to listen further—mainly by force of the red-coated arguments he had brought to bear.

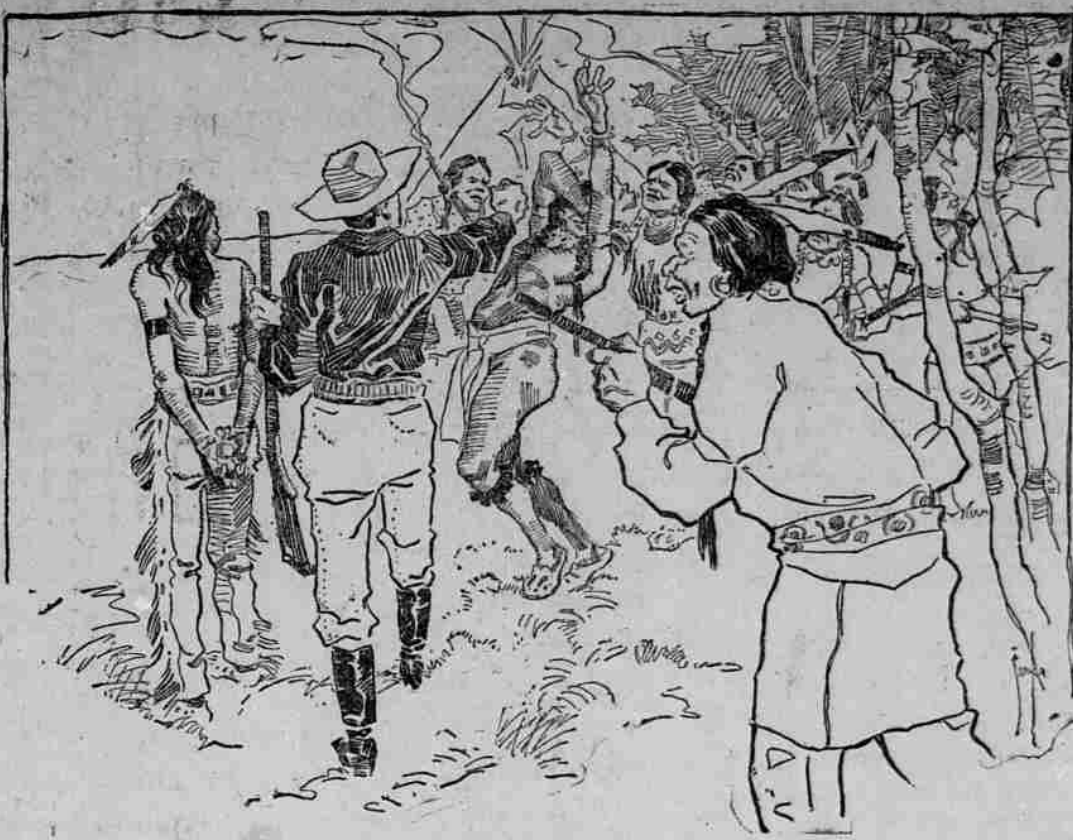
"Tarry here, my brothers," he said, "until I send Constable Collins and two others of my men to arrest the murderers. The Salteux are subjects of the queen. We cannot allow them to be killed for the fun of the thing."

ADVENTURE OF JACK COLLINS.

Then big Jack Collins—wild Irishman and all the rest of it—went over to the Sioux camp and arrested three. The bucks justified and showed them, fired pistols over their heads, but big Jack and his comrades hung on to their prisoners and worked their way to the post, with no sign of annoyance until a big buck spat in Collins' face.

A big mutton-leg fist shot out, and the Sioux lay like a crushed moccasin at Jack's feet. "Take that, ye black bastards!" he hissed between clenched teeth; "and ye've made me disobey orders, ye foul fiend!"

Then he marched his prisoners into the post, and reported himself for misconduct in striking an Indian. Duck lake is the "tenderloin district" of the prairie provinces. It lies a hundred miles north of Regina, the capital of the territories. Last year four white men and three Indians lay there dead; that the peace broken by



A BIG MUTTON LEG FIST SHOT OUT.

one Indian outlaw might be whole again.

Almighty Voice, son of John Sound-Sky, was hungry. He killed a cow, sat his own; therefore, a sergeant and a half-breed guide rode out to bring him before a magistrate. They came upon him in company of two squaws. He had just killed a prairie chicken.

"Tell him I've come to arrest him for killing cattle," said the sergeant to the guide.

"Tell him if he advances I'll kill him," answered Almighty Voice.

The guide covered the Indian with his carbine, but the sergeant said: "We have no authority to kill. We have come only to arrest. Tell him to lay down his arms."

The sergeant had no choice. He could not retire; he had no authority to shoot the Indian; he had orders to arrest him, even if it cost him his life—and it did. Another forward pace, and the sergeant's carbine spoke through the heart.

A price was set on the murderer's head. A thousand miles west, a thousand miles north, the red-coated riders watched for Almighty Voice, who was shielded through many moons by his Indian friends at Duck lake.

One day in June a half-breed scout and a companion were bringing in a horse thief. As they came to a clump of poplars, the thief disappeared and Almighty Voice came in view. Soon the scout was galloping for life, with a bullet through his back, and Sergeant Colbrook's slayer, running, and the wind at his horse's heels, making savage clutches at the swishing tail.

Low on his horse's neck the scout rode, with reeling brain. The horse gained a little. The pursuer, stopped an instant, his fierce black eyes gleaming along a gun-barrel. The bullet cut the scout's cowboy hat and severed the wove-chair between the horse's ears. The bit dropped from his mouth, and under the new freedom the horse sped faster.

The news was flashed into Prince Albert. Captain Allen and a detachment of police rode eighty miles that night.

In the morning, as they reconnoitered, Allen saw three blots scamper into a bluff on all fours like a deer. They surrounded the bluff. As Captain Allen paroled the bushes he leaned far down the side of his horse—but too late. He heard the bone in his right arm snap like glass. Almighty Voice's bullet had smashed it at the shoulder. Thrown by the shock, the officer crawled a little way through the thick grass, then raised himself on one knee, only to look into the eyes of Almighty Voice.

"Throw me your cartridge belt or I'll kill you!" he said in Cree.

"Never," answered Allen. Just then a bullet spat against the trunk of a poplar. A constable had sighted the Indian. The latter jumped back among the trees.

They tried to burn out the Indians, but the growth was too green. Then three men crept in to try and unearth the desperadoes. Those on guard outside heard at irregular intervals the rifles speak, but no message came out of the deep shadow. No fleeing Indians appeared in the open, no smoke-trimmed policeman struggled forth holding a dark captive.

At last there was utter silence. The watchers grew heavy-hearted. Cameraderie is strong in the force, almost as strong as courage. At last, characteristically, two men undertook what three had failed to do. They were O'Kelly and Cook. Crawling flat upon his stomach, O'Kelly discovered three runways made by breaking down small bushes, and ending in a death-trap—a pair of Khaki-colored legs in front of him. As he seized upon them they were wrenched from his grasp and disappeared over the embankment into the pit. An Indian sprang up to get a better shot—the bullet from O'Kelly's rifle crashed through his brain. The constable flattened out and hugged earth as though he loved it, yet a shot

from Almighty Voice tore a spur from off his heel.

A FIGHT IN A THICKET.

All night they guarded the bluff. Next day the fight was like a Roman spectacle. A near hill was covered with Indian and half-breed spectators. The old tan-faced mother of Almighty Voice sat there and crooned a weird death song, and cheered her boy to fight to the death like an Indian brave. She screamed defiance of the police—her son would slay many more of them.

His end was drawing near. A field gun brought up from Regina threw a few shells into the bluff. When the smoke cleared away, the pit held three dead Indians, and it was "all quiet along the Saskatchewan" once more.

Now a little as to the physique of the northwestern mounted police. In height their average is 5 feet 9 inches, with a chest measurement of 38 inches. Men and horses are subjected to a most searching medical examination before being taken on. The regulations of enlistment are framed, indeed, "to make it a most difficult force to get into, and an easy one to get out of." Result, a fine body of contented men, and few desertions.

Besides keeping the peace, the police gather for the government information upon every subject under the sun—at least, the sun which shines from the forty-ninth parallel northward. Stringent laws exist against the setting out of fire on the prairie lands, and summary justice awaits the offender. Sometimes there are fierce battles between the fire fiend and the constables. It is a stirring picture—two policemen with wet blankets knotted together, and trailing upon the ground, galloping, one on either side of a line of leaping, hungry fire. Miles and miles of fire they put out in this fashion. Every constable has authority to call upon civilians to help him fight fire.

THE REIL REBELLION.

During the Reil rebellion the police were always at the front. It was at the taking of Batoche that Jack French, a big, hard-fighting Irishman,

Inspector of police, became immortal. After a hot scrimmage a wounded policeman was left on the field. Jack French saw him and shouted now a bribe with the music of an organ in it. "What are you doin' there, Cook?" "I'm wounded!" came back a faint call.

"It's meself! carry you, this!" And down he marched, whistling, though two bullets cut the skirts of his tunic. "They're gettin' pretty close now," muttered Jack; but he was only a few feet from Cook.

May it be remembered, to the credit of the half-breed rebels, that when they realized what French's mission was, they ceased fire. And when he swung his comrade upon his broad shoulders and started home with him, a cheer ran along the whole rebel line. He brought Cook in safe, then went back to the fighting. His reward was not the Victoria Cross, for in half an hour he was dead. Cook still lives. He is in the government employ.

In the annals of the police there are heroic stories enough to fill a mighty volume—perhaps even stranger tales than I have told here.

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